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October 26, 2022

Hon. Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:


I am pleased to hear you will be meeting with the Government of Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, in advance of the G7 meetings next week. As you well know, the relationship between the United States and Canada is unique, and discussion of our binational priorities prior to a multilateral meeting serves great purpose in achieving mutual goals. I write to bring Northern Border issues, including current COVID-19 border restrictions, the NEXUS backlog, and their economic impacts, to your attention, so they may be addressed during your upcoming discussions.

Since March 21, 2020, the land border between the United States and Canada has had some level of COVID-19 restrictions in place for non-essential travelers. However, the Government of Canada lifted all COVID-19 land border restrictions as of October 1, 2022. The United States government has yet to reciprocate, and still requires individuals entering the country through a land port of entry to be fully vaccinated and provide proof of vaccination, a policy that has been in place since November 8, 2021. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 895,157 personal vehicle passengers crossed the border at the Buffalo-Niagara Falls crossings in September 2019. In September 2022, that number is 551,663, only 61.6% of 2019 levels. The United States must lift its border restrictions to encourage a return to pre-pandemic levels of travel and economic activity.

Another impediment to cross-border travel and commerce is the severe backlog in processing NEXUS applications and the continued closure of Canadian NEXUS enrollment centers. While U.S. enrollment centers re-opened in on April 19, 2022, Canadian facilities remain closed. Officials from both governments have indicated negotiation of certain immunities for U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in Canadian NEXUS enrollment centers is in part responsible for this delay. The current NEXUS backlog is approximately 334,000 applications. At the time of writing, there were no interview appointments available at the Niagara Falls, N.Y. Enrollment Center. With acknowledgement that both parties are discussing mutually agreeable paths forward, I urge both governments to come to a resolution to open Canadian NEXUS enrollment centers expeditiously to address the backlog and encourage smooth cross-border travel.

Thank you for your consideration of these most important issues as we work to return to pre-pandemic levels of operation along the Northern Border.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS  
Member of Congress